

## ❧XIII❧

### Of Auxiliary, Mixed, and One's Own Soldiers

Auxiliary arms, which are the other useless arms, are those of a power that is called to come with its arms to help and defend you, as was done by Pope Julius in recent times. When he had seen in the campaign of Ferrara the sad result of his mercenary arms, he turned to auxiliary ones; and he agreed with Ferdinand, king of Spain, that Ferdinand would help him with his men and armies. These arms can be useful and good in themselves, but for whoever calls them in, they are almost always harmful, because when they lose you are undone; when they win, you are left their prisoner. And although ancient histories are full of examples, nonetheless I do not wish to depart from this recent example of Pope Julius II, whose course of thrusting himself entirely into the hands of a foreigner, when he wanted Ferrara, could not have been less thought out. But his good fortune gave rise to a third thing so that he did not reap the fruit of his bad choice; for when his auxiliaries were defeated at Ravenna,<sup>1</sup> the Swiss rose up and, beyond all expectation, his own and others, drove out the victors; and he came out a prisoner neither of his enemies, who had fled, nor of his auxiliaries, since he had won with other arms than theirs. The Florentines, who were entirely unarmed, brought in ten thousand French to Pisa to capture it,<sup>2</sup> for which course they incurred more danger than in any other time of their travails. The emperor of Constantinople, so as to oppose his neighbors, sent ten thousand Turks into Greece; when the war was finished, they refused to leave.<sup>3</sup>

1. In 1512.

2. In 1500.

3. Emperor John Cantacuzene, in 1353.



This was the beginning of the servitude of Greece under the infidels.

Let him, then, who wants to be unable to win make use of these arms, since they are much more dangerous than mercenary arms. For with these, ruin is accomplished; they are all united, all resolved to obey someone else. But mercenary arms, when they have won, need more time and greater opportunity to hurt you, since they are not one whole body and have been found and paid for by you. In them the third party whom you may put at their head cannot quickly seize so much authority as to offend you. In sum, in mercenary arms laziness is more dangerous; in auxiliary arms, virtue is.

A wise prince, therefore, has always avoided these arms and turned to his own. He has preferred to lose with his own than to win with others, since he judges it no true victory that is acquired with alien arms. I shall never hesitate to cite Cesare Borgia and his actions. This duke came into Romagna with auxiliary arms, leading there entirely French troops, with whom he took Imola and Forlì. But when such arms no longer appeared safe to him, he turned to mercenaries, judging there to be less danger in them; and he hired the Orsini and Vitelli. Then in managing them, he found them doubtful, unfaithful, and dangerous; he eliminated them, and turned to his own arms. And one can easily see the difference between these arms if one considers what a difference there was in the reputation of the duke when he had only the French, and when he had the Orsini and Vitelli, and when he was left with his own soldiers and himself over them: his reputation will be found always to have increased, but he was never so much esteemed as when everyone saw that he was the total owner of his arms.

I did not want to depart from examples that are Italian and recent; yet I do not want to leave out Hiero of Syracuse, since he was one of those named above by me.<sup>4</sup> When he, as

4. In Chapter 6.



I said, was made head of the army by the Syracusans, he knew immediately that their mercenary military was not useful because they were condottieri set up like our Italians. Since he thought he could neither keep them nor let them go, he had them all cut to pieces, and then made war with his arms and not with alien arms. I want further to recall to memory a figure of the Old Testament apt for this purpose. When David offered to Saul to go and fight Goliath, the Philistine challenger, Saul, to give him spirit, armed him with his own arms—which David, as soon as he had them on, refused, saying that with them he could not give a good account of himself, and so he would rather meet the enemy with his sling and his knife.<sup>5</sup>

In fine, the arms of others either fall off your back or weigh you down or hold you tight. Charles VII, father of King Louis XI, who had liberated France from the English with his fortune and virtue, recognized this necessity of arming himself with his own arms, and laid down<sup>6</sup> an ordinance in his kingdom for men-at-arms and infantry. Then his son King Louis eliminated the ordinance for infantry and began to hire Swiss; this error, continued by others, is, as one sees now in fact, the cause of the dangers to that kingdom. For when he gave reputation to the Swiss, he debased all his own arms, because he had eliminated the infantry entirely and he had obligated his men-at-arms to the arms of others. For after they had become accustomed to fighting with Swiss, they did not think they could win without them. From this it follows that French are not enough against Swiss and without Swiss do not try against anyone else. Thus, the armies of France have been mixed, part mercenary and part their own. These arms all together are much better than simple auxiliary or simple mercenary

5. NM's account of this episode differs significantly from the biblical original in 1 Samuel 17: 38–40, 50–51.

6. lit.: ordered.



arms, but much inferior to one's own. And the example given is enough, because the kingdom of France would be unconquerable if the ordering of Charles had been expanded or preserved. But lack of prudence in men begins something in which, because it tastes good then, they do not perceive the poison that lies underneath, as I said above of consumptive fevers.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, he who does not recognize evils when they arise in a principality is not truly wise, and this is given to few. And if one considers the first cause of the ruin of the Roman Empire, one will find it to have begun only with the hiring of Goths, because from that beginning the forces of the Roman Empire began to weaken, and all the virtue that was taken from it was given to them.

I conclude, thus, that without its own arms no principality is secure; indeed it is wholly obliged to fortune since it does not have virtue to defend itself<sup>8</sup> in adversity. And it has always been the opinion and judgment of wise men "that nothing is so infirm and unstable as fame for power not sustained by one's own force."<sup>9</sup> And one's own arms are those which are composed of either subjects or citizens or your creatures: all others are either mercenary or auxiliary. And the mode of ordering one's own arms will be easy to find if one reviews<sup>10</sup> the orders of the four I have named above<sup>11</sup> and if one sees how Philip, father of Alexander the Great, and how many republics and princes have armed and ordered themselves. I submit myself entirely to these orders.

7. In Chapter 3, where NM referred to diseases, not to remedies.

8. One manuscript has "with faith" at this point.

9. Quoted by NM in Latin from Tacitus, *Annals* XIII.19; the words *rerum mortalium* ("of mortal things") have been omitted by NM after "nothing."

10. lit.: discourses on.

11. The four named in this chapter are Cesare Borgia, Hiero, David, and Charles VII. In Chapter 6 NM mentions Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus.